

Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists
Occupations Code
Chapter 401
Administered by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
(Effective September 1, 2017)

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SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 401.001. Definitions.

In this chapter:

- (1) “Advisory board” means the Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists Advisory Board.
- (1-a) “Audiologist” means a person who meets the qualifications of this chapter to practice audiology.
- (2) “Audiology” means the application of nonmedical principles, methods, and procedures for measurement, testing, appraisal, prediction, consultation, counseling, habilitation, rehabilitation, or instruction related to disorders of the auditory or vestibular systems for the purpose of providing or offering to provide services modifying communicative disorders involving speech, language, or auditory or vestibular function or other aberrant behavior relating to hearing loss.
- (3) “Commission” means the Texas Commission of Licensing and Regulation
- (4) “Department” means the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.
- (4-a) “Executive director” means the executive director of the department.
- (4-b) “Hearing instrument” has the meaning assigned by Section 402.001.
- (5) “Speech-language pathologist” means a person who meets the qualifications of this chapter to practice speech-language pathology.
- (6) “Speech-language pathology” means the application of nonmedical principles, methods, and procedures for measurement, testing, evaluation, prediction, counseling, habilitation, rehabilitation, or instruction related to the development and disorders of communication, including speech, voice, language, oral pharyngeal function, or cognitive processes, for the purpose of evaluating, preventing, or modifying or offering to evaluate, prevent, or modify those disorders and conditions in an individual or a group.

SUBCHAPTER B. APPLICATION OF CHAPTER

Sec. 401.051. Physicians.

- (a) This chapter does not prevent or restrict a physician from engaging in the practice of medicine in this state.
- (b) This chapter does not restrict a licensed physician from personally conducting a speech or hearing test or evaluation.

Sec. 401.052. Nurses.

This chapter does not prevent or restrict a communication, speech, language, or hearing screening, as defined by commission rule, from being conducted by a registered nurse:

- (1) licensed in this state; and
- (2) practicing in accordance with the standards of professional conduct and ethics established by rules adopted by the Texas Board of Nursing.

Sec. 401.053. Persons Trained by Department of State Health Services.

- (a) This chapter does not apply to a person who shows evidence of having received training by the Department of State Health Services in a communication, speech, language, or hearing screening training program approved by that department if the person's activity is limited to screening as defined by commission rule.
- (b) A person who has received training by the Department of State Health Services in a program under Subsection (a) may not:
 - (1) practice speech-language pathology or audiology; or
 - (2) represent that the person is a speech-language pathologist or audiologist.

Sec. 401.054. Persons Certified by Texas Education Agency.

- (a) This chapter does not prevent or restrict the activities and services or the use of an official title by a person who is certified in speech-language pathology by the Texas Education Agency if the person only performs speech-language pathology or audiology services as part of the person's duties within an agency, institution, or organization under the jurisdiction of the Texas Education Agency.
- (b) The Texas Education Agency certificate in speech-language pathology must require an applicant to:
 - (1) hold a master's degree in communicative disorders or the equivalent from a university program accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; and
 - (2) pass a national examination in speech-language pathology or audiology approved by the department.
- (c) A person affected by this section who performs work as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in addition to performing the person's duties within an agency, institution, or organization under the jurisdiction of the Texas Education Agency is required to hold a license issued by the department unless that work is limited to speech and hearing screening procedures performed without compensation.
- (d) For the purposes of Subsection (b)(1), an applicant's educational credentials are equivalent to a master's degree in communicative disorders if the credentials:
 - (1) consist of graduate-level course work and practicum from a program accredited by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association; and
 - (2) meet requirements that are the same as those established by the department for a license in speech-language pathology or audiology.
- (e) The clinical fellowship year experience or internship may not be a requirement for the Texas Education Agency certificate in speech-language pathology.

Sec. 401.055. University or College Teachers.

This chapter does not restrict the use of an official title by a person teaching in a university or college training program, if the person:

- (1) is not engaged in the practice of speech-language pathology or audiology; and
- (2) does not supervise a person engaged in the practice of speech-language pathology or audiology.

Sec. 401.056. Students.

This chapter does not restrict the activities and services of a student pursuing a course of study leading to a degree in speech-language pathology or audiology at a college or university accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Universities or its equivalent if:

- (1) the activities and services are part of the student's supervised course of study;
- (2) the student is supervised by a person licensed under this chapter; and
- (3) the student is designated as a "Speech-Language Pathology Trainee," an "Audiology Trainee," or by another title that clearly indicates the student's professional preparation status.

Sec. 401.057. Hearing Conservation Program.

This chapter does not prevent a person in an industrial setting from engaging in hearing testing as a part of a hearing conservation program in compliance with federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration regulations.

Sec. 401.058. Application to Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers.

- (a) This chapter does not prevent or restrict a person licensed under Chapter 402 from engaging in the practice of fitting and dispensing hearing instruments.
- (b) This chapter does not prohibit a fitter and dispenser of hearing instruments licensed under Chapter 402 from measuring human hearing by any means, including an audiometer, to make a selection, adaptation, or sale of a hearing instrument, including:
 - (1) making impressions for earmolds to be used as part of a hearing instrument; and
 - (2) providing post-fitting counseling to fit and dispense hearing instruments.
- (c) A person who is not an audiologist who is licensed to fit and dispense hearing instruments under Chapter 402 may not:
 - (1) practice speech-language pathology or audiology; or
 - (2) represent that the person is a speech-language pathologist or audiologist by the use of any term restricted by this chapter.

Sec. 401.059. Application to Other Licensed Professionals.

This chapter does not prevent a person licensed in this state under another law from engaging in the profession for which the person is licensed.

Sec. 401.060. Medical Practice.

This chapter does not permit a person to perform an act that violates Subtitle B.

SUBCHAPTER C. SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUDIOLOGISTS ADVISORY BOARD

Sec. 401.102. Advisory Board Membership.

- (a) The advisory board consists of nine members appointed by the presiding officer of the commission with the approval of the commission as follows:
 - (1) three audiologist members;
 - (2) three speech-language pathologist members; and

- (3) three members who represent the public.
- (b) Advisory board members must:
 - (1) be from the various geographic regions of the state; and
 - (2) be from varying employment settings.
- (c) The advisory board members appointed under Subsections (a)(1) and (2) must:
 - (1) have been engaged in teaching, research, or providing services in speech-language pathology or audiology for at least five years; and
 - (2) be licensed under this chapter.
- (d) One of the public advisory board members must be a physician licensed in this state and certified in otolaryngology or pediatrics.
- (e) Appointments to the advisory board shall be made without regard to the race, creed, sex, religion, or national origin of the appointee.

Sec. 401.10205. Duties of Advisory Board.

The advisory board shall provide advice and recommendations to the department on technical matters relevant to the administration of this chapter.

Sec. 401.105. Terms; Vacancies.

- (a) Members are appointed for staggered six-year terms. The terms of three members expire September 1 of each odd-numbered year.
- (b) If a vacancy occurs during a member's term, the presiding officer of the commission, with the commission's approval, shall appoint a replacement who meets the qualifications for the vacant position to serve for the remainder of the term.

Sec. 401.107. Presiding Officer.

- (a) The presiding officer of the commission shall designate a member of the advisory board to serve as the presiding officer of the advisory board for a term of one year.
- (b) The presiding officer of the advisory board may vote on any matter before the advisory board.

Sec. 401.108. Meetings.

The advisory board shall meet at the call of the presiding officer of the commission or the executive director.

SUBCHAPTER E. POWERS AND DUTIES

Sec. 401.201. General Powers and Duties.

- (a) The executive director shall administer and enforce this chapter.
- (a-1) The department shall:

- (1) evaluate the qualifications of license applicants;
- (2) provide for the examination of license applicants;
- (3) in connection with a hearing under this chapter, issue subpoenas, examine witnesses, and administer oaths under the laws of this state; and
- (4) investigate persons engaging in practices that violate this chapter.

Sec. 401.202. Standards of Ethical Practice.

The commission shall adopt rules under this chapter that establish standards of ethical practice.

Sec. 401.201. Rules for Hearing Instruments.

With the assistance of the advisory board and the Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers Advisory Board, the commission shall adopt rules to establish requirements for each sale of a hearing instrument for purposes of this chapter and Chapter 402. The rules must:

- (1) address:
 - (A) the information and other provisions required in each written contract for the purchase of a hearing instrument;
 - (B) records that must be retained under this chapter or Chapter 402; and
 - (C) guidelines for the 30-day trial period during which a person may cancel the purchase of a hearing instrument; and
- (2) require that the written contract and 30-day trial period information provided to a purchaser of a hearing instrument be in plain language designed to be easily understood by the average consumer.

Sec. 401.202. Rules for Fitting and Dispensing of Hearing Instruments by Telepractice.

- (a) In this section, “telepractice” means the use of telecommunications technology by a license holder for an assessment, intervention, or consultation regarding a speech-language pathology or audiology client.
- (b) With the assistance of the advisory board and the Hearing Instrument Fitters and Dispensers Advisory Board, the commission shall adopt rules to establish requirements for the fitting and dispensing of hearing instruments by the use of telepractice for purposes of this chapter and Chapter 402, including rules that establish the qualifications and duties of license holders who use telepractice.

Sec. 401.203. Assistance Filing Complaint.

- (c) The department shall provide reasonable assistance to a person who wishes to file a complaint with the department regarding a person or activity regulated under this chapter.

SUBCHAPTER F. PUBLIC ACCESS AND INFORMATION

Sec. 401.251. Telephone Number for Complaints.

The department shall list with its regular telephone number any toll-free telephone number established under other state law that may be called to present a complaint about a health professional.

Sec. 401.2535. Confidentiality of Complaint and Disciplinary Information.

- (h) All information and materials subpoenaed or compiled by the department in connection with a complaint and investigation are confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter 552, Government Code, and not subject to disclosure, discovery, subpoena, or other means of legal compulsion for their release to anyone other than the department or its employees or agents involved in discipline of the holder of a license, except that this information may be disclosed to:
 - (1) persons involved with the department in a disciplinary action against the holder of a license;
 - (2) professional speech-language pathologist and audiologist licensing or disciplinary boards in other jurisdictions;
 - (3) peer assistance programs approved by the commission under Chapter 467, Health and Safety Code;
 - (4) law enforcement agencies; and
 - (5) persons engaged in bona fide research, if all individual-identifying information has been deleted.
- (i) The filing of formal charges by the department against a holder of a license, the nature of those charges, disciplinary proceedings of the department, commission, or executive director, and final disciplinary actions, including warnings and reprimands, by the department, commission, or executive director are not confidential and are subject to disclosure in accordance with Chapter 552, Government Code.

SUBCHAPTER G. LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Sec. 401.301. License Required.

A person may not practice speech-language pathology or audiology or represent that the person is a speech-language pathologist or audiologist in this state unless the person holds a license under this chapter.

Sec. 401.302. Issuance of License.

- (a) The department shall issue a license to an applicant who meets the requirements of this chapter and who pays to the department the initial nonrefundable license fee.
- (b) The department may issue to an applicant a license in either speech-language pathology or audiology.
- (c) The department may issue a license in both speech-language pathology and audiology to an applicant.
- (d) The commission by rule shall establish qualifications for dual licensing in speech-language pathology and audiology and may develop a full range of licensing options and establish rules for qualifications.

Sec. 401.303. License Application.

- (a) A person who desires a license under this chapter must apply to the department on a form and in the manner prescribed by the executive director.
- (b) The application must be accompanied by a nonrefundable application fee.

Sec. 401.304. Applicant Eligibility.

- (a) To be eligible for licensing as a speech-language pathologist or audiologist, an applicant must:
 - (1) if the application is for a license in:
 - (A) speech-language pathology, possess at least a master's degree with a major in at least one of the areas of communicative sciences or disorders from a program accredited by a national accrediting organization that is approved by the commission or department and recognized by the United States secretary of education under the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. Section 1001 et seq.) in an accredited or approved college or university; or
 - (B) audiology, possess at least a doctoral degree in audiology or a related hearing science from a program accredited by a national accrediting organization that is approved by the commission or department and recognized by the United States secretary of education under the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. Section 1001 et seq.) in an accredited or approved college or university;
 - (2) submit a transcript from a public or private institution of higher learning showing successful completion of course work in amounts set by the commission by rule in:
 - (A) normal development and use of speech, language, and hearing;
 - (B) evaluation, habilitation, and rehabilitation of speech, language, and hearing disorders; and
 - (C) related fields that augment the work of clinical practitioners of speech-language pathology and audiology;
 - (3) have successfully completed at least 36 semester hours in courses that are acceptable toward a graduate degree by the college or university in which the courses are taken, at least 24 of which must be in the professional area for which the license is requested;
 - (4) have completed the minimum number of hours, established by the commission by rule, of supervised clinical experience with persons who present a variety of communication disorders; and
 - (5) have completed the full-time supervised professional experience, as defined by commission rule, in which clinical work has been accomplished in the major professional area for which the license is being sought.
- (b) Clinical experience required under Subsection (a)(4) must be obtained:
 - (1) in the applicant's educational institution or in one of the institution's cooperating programs; and
 - (2) under the supervision of a person holding a license to practice speech-language pathology or audiology.
- (c) Supervised professional experience under Subsection (a)(5) must:
 - (1) be under the supervision of a qualified person acceptable to the department under guidelines approved by the commission; and
 - (2) begin after completion of the academic and clinical experience required by this section.

Sec. 401.3041. Criminal History Record Information Requirement for License Issuance.

- (a) The department shall require that an applicant for a license submit a complete and legible set of fingerprints, on a form prescribed by the department, to the department or to the Department of Public Safety for the purpose of obtaining criminal history record information from the Department of Public Safety and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- (b) The department may not issue a license to a person who does not comply with the requirement of Subsection (a).
- (c) The department shall conduct a criminal history check of each applicant for a license using information:
 - (1) provided by the individual under this section; and
 - (2) made available to the department by the Department of Public Safety, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and any other criminal justice agency under Chapter 411, Government Code.
- (d) The department may:
 - (1) enter into an agreement with the Department of Public Safety to administer a criminal history check required under this section; and
 - (2) authorize the Department of Public Safety to collect from each applicant the costs incurred by the Department of Public Safety in conducting the criminal history check.

Sec. 401.305. Examination.

- (a) To obtain a license, an applicant must:
 - (1) pass an examination approved by the commission by rule; and
 - (2) pay fees in a manner prescribed by the commission by rule.
- (b) The department shall administer or provide for the administration of an examination at least twice each year.
- (b-1) The commission by rule shall determine standards for acceptable performance on the examination.
- (c) The commission by rule may:
 - (1) establish procedures for the administration of the examination; and
 - (2) require a written or oral examination, or both.
- (d) The commission by rule may require the examination of an applicant in any theoretical or applied field of speech-language pathology or audiology it considers appropriate. The commission by rule may require the examination of an applicant on professional skills and judgment in the use of speech-language pathology or audiology techniques or methods.

Sec. 401.308. Provisional License; Certificate of Clinical Competence Waiver.

- (a) The department may grant a provisional license to an applicant who:
 - (1) is licensed in good standing as a speech-language pathologist or an audiologist in another state that has licensing requirements that are substantially equivalent to the requirements of this chapter;
 - (2) has passed a national or other examination recognized by the department relating to speech-language pathology or audiology; and

- (3) is sponsored by a license holder with whom the provisional license holder may practice under this section.
- (b) An applicant for a provisional license may be excused from the requirement of Subsection (a)(3) if the department determines that compliance with that requirement is a hardship to the applicant.
- (c) A provisional license is valid until the date the department approves or denies the provisional license holder's application for a license.
- (d) The department shall issue a license under this chapter to a provisional license holder:
 - (1) who passes the examination required by Section 401.305;
 - (2) for whom the department verifies satisfaction of the academic and experience requirements for a license under this chapter; and
 - (3) who satisfies any other license requirements under this chapter.
- (e) The department shall complete the processing of a provisional license holder's application for a license not later than the 180th day after the date the provisional license is issued.
- (f) The department may waive the examination requirement and issue a license to an applicant who holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

Sec. 401.311. Intern License.

- (a) A license applicant who has completed only the requirements of Sections 401.304(a)(1)-(4) may be licensed as an intern under this chapter.
- (b) An applicant who has successfully completed the academic and clinical requirements of Sections 401.304(a)(1)-(4) but who has not had the degree officially conferred on the applicant may be licensed as an intern under this chapter.
- (c) The commission by rule shall:
 - (1) prescribe the terms governing a person's practice as an intern under this section; and
 - (2) establish general guidelines and renewal procedures for the holder of an intern license.

Sec. 401.312. Licensed Assistants.

- (a) The commission by rule may establish minimum qualifications for licensed assistants in speech-language pathology and in audiology.
- (b) A licensed assistant in speech-language pathology or in audiology must meet the minimum qualifications established by the commission.
- (c) A licensed assistant in speech-language pathology shall work under the direction of a licensed speech-language pathologist.
- (d) The qualifications for licensing as a licensed assistant in speech-language pathology must be uniform and be less stringent than the requirements under this chapter for a speech-language pathologist license.
- (e) A licensed assistant in audiology shall work under the direction of a licensed audiologist.

- (f) The qualifications for licensing as a licensed assistant in audiology must be uniform and be less stringent than the requirements under this chapter for an audiologist license.

SUBCHAPTER H. LICENSE EXPIRATION AND RENEWAL

Sec. 401.351. License Term.

A license issued under this chapter is valid for two years.

Sec. 401.352. License Renewal.

- (a) Each licensed speech-language pathologist or audiologist must pay the nonrefundable fee for license renewal.

Sec. 401.355. Continuing Education.

- (a) The commission by rule shall establish uniform mandatory continuing education requirements. A license holder may not renew the person's license unless the person meets the continuing education requirements.
- (b) The commission shall establish the requirements in a manner that allows a license holder to comply without an extended absence from the license holder's county of residence.

SUBCHAPTER I. PRACTICE BY LICENSE HOLDER

Sec. 401.401. Audiometric Testing.

- (a) If audiometric testing is not conducted in a stationary acoustical enclosure, sound-level measurements must be conducted at the time of the testing to ensure that ambient noise levels meet permissible standards for testing threshold to 20 dB based on the most recent American National Standards Institute "ears covered" octave band criteria for permissible ambient noise levels during audiometric testing.
- (b) A dBa equivalent level may be used to determine compliance.
- (c) The commission shall adopt rules necessary to enforce this section.

Sec. 401.402. Practice by Speech-Language Pathologists.

- (a) A speech-language pathologist may perform basic audiometric screening tests and aural habilitation or rehabilitation.
- (b) A person licensed as a speech-language pathologist under this chapter may not fit or dispense hearing instruments unless the person meets the specific requirements for fitting and dispensing hearing instruments under this chapter or Chapter 402.

Sec. 401.403. Practice by Audiologists.

- (a) An audiologist may:
 - (1) engage in any act necessary to:
 - (A) evaluate hearing;
 - (B) train in the use of amplification, including hearing instruments;
 - (C) make earmolds for hearing instruments;

- (D) fit, dispense, and sell hearing instruments; or
 - (E) manage cerumen;
 - (2) participate in consultation regarding noise control and hearing conservation;
 - (3) provide evaluations of environment or equipment, including calibration of equipment used in testing auditory functioning and hearing conservation; and
 - (4) perform basic speech and language screening tests and procedures consistent with the audiologist's training.
- (b) A person who meets the requirements of this chapter for licensing as an audiologist or audiologist intern and who fits and dispenses hearing instruments must:
- (1) register with the department the person's intention to fit and dispense hearing instruments;
 - (2) comply with the profession's code of ethics;
 - (3) comply with the federal Food and Drug Administration guidelines for fitting and dispensing hearing instruments;
 - (4) when providing services in this state, use a written contract that contains the department's name, mailing address, and telephone number; and
 - (5) follow the guidelines adopted by commission rule for a 30-day trial period on every hearing instrument purchased.

Sec. 401.404. Hearing Instrument Sales to Minors.

A licensed audiologist may not sell a hearing instrument to a person under 18 years of age unless the person or the parent or guardian of the person presents to the audiologist a written statement signed by a licensed physician who specializes in diseases of the ear stating that:

- (1) the person's hearing loss has been medically evaluated during the six-month period preceding the date the statement is presented; and
- (2) the person may be considered a candidate for a hearing instrument.

SUBCHAPTER J. LICENSE DENIAL AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Sec. 401.451. Grounds for License Denial and Disciplinary Action.

- (a) After a hearing, the commission or executive director may deny a license to an applicant or may suspend or revoke a person's license or place on probation a license holder if the applicant or license holder:
 - (1) violates this chapter or an order issued or rule adopted under this chapter;
 - (2) obtains a license by means of fraud, misrepresentation, or concealment of a material fact;
 - (3) sells, barter, or offers to sell or barter a license or certificate of registration; or
 - (4) engages in unprofessional conduct that:

- (A) endangers or is likely to endanger the health, welfare, or safety of the public as defined by commission rule; or
- (B) violates the code of ethics adopted and published by the commission.

SUBCHAPTER K. PENALTIES AND OTHER ENFORCEMENT PROVISIONS

Sec. 401.501. Deceptive Trade Practice.

A violation of Section 401.301 is a deceptive trade practice.

Sec. 401.5021. Refund.

The commission or executive director may order an audiologist to pay a refund to a consumer who returns a hearing instrument during the 30-day trial period required by rules adopted under Section 401.2021.

NOTE: ACTS 2017, 85th LEG., HB 4007, Section 2.005 effective September 1, 2017 reads:

(a) A temporary certificate of registration issued under former Section 401.310, Occupations Code., that is in effect on the effective date of this Act continues to be valid until the certificate expires and former Section 401.310, Occupations Code, is continued in effect for that purpose. Chapter 401, Occupations Code, as amended by this Act, continues to apply to a holder of an unexpired temporary certificate of registration.

(b) On or after the effective date of this Act, the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation may not renew or extend a temporary certificate of registration.